

TRANSPORTATION PERMIT EFFICIENCY and ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

Agenda for the Thirty First Meeting Marcus Whitman Hotel, Walla Walla, WA Wednesday, September 28, 2005

AGENDA ITEM

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Senator Dan Swecker convened the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

Senator Swecker introduced legislators, invited local officials, TPEAC members, TPEAC staff, and other guests.

Gordon Heimbigner, Walla Walla County Treasurer, welcomed TPEAC to Walla Walla. Gordon spoke of how tourism has an important role in Walla Walla. The wine industry has grown to a level that it is replacing the wheat industry in production.

Don Whitehouse, WDOT South Central Regional Administrator, thanked TPEAC and WSDOT for the selection of project 24. A good project is one that fits the community and accommodates the future. The US 12 project will be completed in phases so all can observe the construction of this project. Great relationships and partnerships have been made as a result of these projects.

2. APPROVAL OF JUNE 21, 2005, MEETING SUMMARY

The previous meeting summary was approved as written.

3. REGIONAL FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT GROUPS (RFEG)

(Update) Report by the Tri-State Steelheaders on the work of the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups to develop a ranked salmon restoration project lists, which assist WSDOT and others in the identification of mitigation projects. Susie Carlin, Executive Director, presented an overhead on the RFEG districts and talked about the regional fisheries groups and their boundaries.

The Koskooski Dam Removal was the most recent Tri-State Steelheaders project. The dam was decommissioned and sold to private ownership and the new ownership contacted the RFEG to remove the dam. Since removal of the dam, 30 miles of habitat has been opened up.

The TriState Steelheaders conduct salmonid habitat restoration projects in WRIAs 32 and 35. These projects include in-stream and riparian habitat enhancement as well as community outreach and educational projects.

During the 2003/2004 fiscal year, the Tri State Steelheaders participated in twelve habitat restoration and fifteen educational/community outreach projects.

Susie Carlin introduced a customized model page for ranking the salmon restoration projects. The model includes the title of component, factors within component, fields for factor weighing, optional fields to add customized factors and the score projects page. This scoring tool provides knowledge on how to rank existing projects. Susie would be happy to share this tool. She feels it would be very useful. A dvd/cd was available for those interested in learning more about how this scoring product works. The floor was opened to questions.

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT WATERSHED APPROACH

Cathy LaRoque, Walla Walla County Watershed Director, opened a discussion on WRIA 32 and its difficulties with the Oregon border and how they overlap. Cathy talked about Walla Walla County and the Watershed Plan Integration. Walla Walla County has intentionally and systematically “integrated” multiple watershed plans, people, and regulatory directives. An implementation framework was created with management objectives, performance measures, action plans, monitoring, and adaptive management. Cathy also went over the different steps taken to assure the planning process is a scientific-based action plan will have the ability to be strategically monitored. Benefits from these plans can be used in other programs and projects.

Rick Anderson, HDR-EES and Consultant for Local Government, talked about the objective and products of the US 12 Pilot. The TPEAC objectives are: improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the permitting process in a project setting. The IMG approach is to use Conceptual Mitigation Strategy to link watershed plan information to permit decisions and use Decision Reports to increase the transparency and collaboration of the decision-making process. Rick explained how to strategize and prioritize for the project.

These are the following steps implemented in the US-12 Pilot:

Step 1: Project Identification (i.e. The “Long List”); 180 Projects identified in 3 sub basins.

Step 2: Create the “Short” List, 19 projects.

Step 3: Evaluate Short List Projects; 3 categories.

Step 4: Peer Review.

There are also three decision reports. Rick explained how this process works and the process builds upon all the information and bases it in making the final decision. Information collected in the SEPA/NEPA phase is used more efficiently at the permitting phase. The floor was opened to questions.

5. U.S.12 PROJECT(S), PARTNERSHIPS, AND PILOT OVERVIEW

Jason Smith, WSDOT South Central Region Assistant Environmental Manager, talked about the **Four-laning U.S. Highway 12** project. This project will expand the current two-lane highway to a four-lane divided highway between Burbank and Walla Walla. The Phase 4 planning study will determine a preferred location for the new four-lane highway from Walla Walla to Wallula. There are eight phases in this project. Cost estimates for Phases 7 & 8 will be developed as part of Phase 4 (Walla Walla Planning

Study). Jason discussed how many of the projects are under construction while others are coming together and nearing completion.

Paul Gerola, Economic Development Director for Port of Walla Walla, and Dr. Fred Bennett, Port of Walla Walla Commissioner, talked about how the US –12 coalition began and the many partnerships that have all worked together to have this project move forward. The environmental issues have played a very important role in getting this project started.

Kerry Grant, Project Engineer, WSDOT SCR, and Larry Mattson, US 12 Environmental Coordinator, WSDOT SCR, discussed phases 6, 7, and 8. This project will improve safety, decrease congestion, and enhance economic vitality. The project cost estimate is \$49.2 million. Construction for the beginning of Phase 6 will begin Winter 2003 to Fall 2009. Kerry and Larry talked about the environmental and traffic impacts. Minimizing the impacts to environmentally sensitive areas is a primary objective in the design of these projects. This project required careful attention to design as it passed through and affected several federally managed sensitive resource lands. Many strong partnerships were developed with state and federal agencies to move forward with this project.

6. TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

Christine Golightly, Columbia Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, thanked the committee for Tribal involvement with the US 12 Project. She introduced the following guest speakers.

Johnson Meninick, Yakama Nation, discussed the project and how it will impact his Tribe. He explained people trails and animal trails. He has concerns with fish, wildlife, monumental sites, and legendary sites. He wants to see protection with these resources. He expressed his feelings that human remains should not be disturbed. Tribal rituals believe when remains are at a site they must be treated with the same respect as if they are alive. Johnson wants the ancestral lands to remain untouched. He would like the oral history to be in their native tongue.

Catherine Dixon, Cultural Resource Protection Program (CRPP), discussed the cultural issues with the Umatilla Tribe. She works with agencies to help them understand tribal ways. Catherine talked about NHPA-protection of cultural resources and traditional culture. With the US 12 project, she expressed her concern with how this project is going to impact oral history, ancestral land, and archeological sites. The ability to be involved in the early part of the project has been very helpful. She feels there has been meaningful consultation in this project. She noted that WSDOT has been very supportive in being sensitive to these Tribal cultures.

Bryan Flett, Upper Columbia United Tribes, talked about oral history with this project and how it could be beneficial to share with local schools.

7. TPEAC WEBSITE

A demonstration of the TPEAC website was presented by Molly Arrandale, Department of Ecology. She presented an overview of the origins, evolution, accomplishments, and

lessons learned of the TPEAC committee. There are several tabs that allow you to easily navigate throughout the website, including: Home, About TPEAC, Process, Products, Lessons Learned, Practitioners Corner, and Next Steps. Molly Arrandale and Scott Boettcher have produced a website that is full of tips, tools, and resources that are beneficial to TPEAC.

8. TPEAC BUDGET

Carrie Berry, WSDOT Liaison Branch Manager, outlined the proposed 05-07 TPEAC biennial spending plan. She noted that TPEAC sunsets in March 2006. Jackie White noted that the \$300,000 the cities/counties sought comes from the gas tax increase. Senator Swecker is working with House staff to clarify the funding of \$300,000 that was not included in proviso language. Senator Swecker asked what happens if it is not available. Carrie noted it would come from the first year and each of the funding items would need to be reduced.

***DECEMBER 2005 MEETING**

Senator Swecker proposed a formal resolution be developed for discussion at the meeting regarding the future of TPEAC. The Office of Regulatory Assistance will be invited to attend. Senator Swecker suggested dropping the "T" from TPEAC to PEAC (Permitting Efficiency and Accountability Committee). The next TPEAC is scheduled for December 8, 2005 and will be held at the Comfort Inn in Tumwater.

9. LUNCH/NETWORKING

10. FIELD TRIP TO US 12 PROJECT SITES

Barb Aberle and Jason Smith started with a brief overview of the sites we would be visiting.

US 12 corridor starting at Pine St, Walla Walla.

Jason Smith/Larry Mattson explained the various stages of progress. When dealing with this type of project there are many unknowns and much information gathering is needed.

The Pine Street features include a right-of-way that was bought over 20 years ago and it will affect private irrigation and a system that is spring fed. The project proposes to widen the existing road that would mean a great deal of personal property having to be bought out given the relatively small lot sizes.

Frenchtown Monument Wayside

The bus pulled over to view the Frenchtown Monument. Jason and Larry discussed the cultural significance of the area and what the South Central Region is doing to minimize risks to cultural resources during project design and construction. WSDOT is working with local historical advocates who are seeking grants for the acquisition, protection, and eventual interpretation of this historical site.

Lowden, Touchet

Discussion of proposed alignment continued as the bus passed through the towns of Lowden and Touchet, it included information on building longer bridges over Lower Dry Creek and the Touchet River channel migration zone. The proposed alignment passes north of both communities; widening the existing highway through these communities would have significant adverse social effects.

Phase 8 Potential Watershed Mitigation Pilot Project

The group got off the bus and walked to the Pierce RV proposed mitigation property. This site was selected through the US-12 TPEAC pilot project (presented by Rick Anderson during the morning meeting). Jason and Larry discussed the advantages of using the parcel for mitigation and some of the challenges it presents (large parcels that would need multiple partners to be feasible).

Pass through Wallula Junction

Discussion on partnerships and mitigation on first phases of US 12.

Two Rivers Mitigation Site

The group got off the bus and walked to the Two Rivers Mitigation site. Jason introduced Al Sutlick from the US Army Corps of Engineers and John Stimeris from WSDOT South Central region. Jason presented information on the Two Rivers Mitigation site. This very successful mitigation site is in its first year after construction. The land is owned by the US Army Corp of Engineers and leased by USFWS. Partnership efforts between the three agencies resulted in this very successful mitigation project. Mitigation efforts completed at the site benefited USFWS by reducing the cover of invasive weeds and increasing habitat for fish and wildlife.

Al Sutlick talked about the partnership with WSDOT and some of the actions that led to the success of the mitigation project.

John Stimeris gave an overview of the management activities that he conducts at the site. He explained the importance of weed control and irrigation. Jason pointed out that irrigation is critical for mitigation projects in eastern Washington. Due to the irrigation and John's management efforts, vegetation growth and cover at the site is better than what is typical for many first year mitigation sites.

RETURN TRIP

On the return trip to Walla Walla, Jason Smith and Don Whitehouse provided information on partnerships the region has developed and provided information on several other South Central region projects including I-90. Partnerships on the SR 24 project will lead to better management of the Yakima River floodplain. Partnerships on the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass project will help connect habitat north and south of the highway.